1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52



reduced to a system of merely occasional assistance. According to my informants the change is due primarily to the high cost of the *egbe*, which to-day few farmers can afford. This is no doubt true if we understand 'cost' in the relative and not in the absolute sense. In the very closely balanced budget with which most Nupe farmers must reckon to-day the comparatively large single outlay for the *egbe* may prove an insuperable difficulty. But this is not the whole picture. A cost is high only measured on the profit it can realize. And here we have seen that one of the most essential kinds of profit—moral profit—which the *egbe* can realize, namely, its assurance of the economic balance between the generations, has itself lost much of its significance in the life of the community.

The second type of collective work, the *dzolo*, is less important than the *egbe*. It is practised only for harvesting of those crops which demand a large working team (ground-nuts, cotton, and beans) and consists in the arrangement among a number of farmers to work in turn on each other's farms. The host provides the meal after the work. But there is no drumming or dancing, nor is any competition involved in the work of the *dzolo*. Neither is the mechanism of the age-grade associations utilized for this collective work, which is carried out on a much smaller scale than the *egbe*, and only between friends, i.e. families whose heads are friendly with one another. In the *dzolo* the tie of friendship evidently supplies that incentive to collective work which, in the *egbe*, is entrusted to the appeal of music and dance and the stimulus of competition.

## WAGE-LABOUR

Assistance in farm-work by means of paid labour plays on the whole (we must add as yet) an insignificant part in Nupe production at large. It is called *kantsú* in Nupe but is often referred to by the Hausa name *lada*, i.e. wages. It is employed by the owners of farms who are not themselves farmers or who for other reasons cannot themselves look after their land. Paid farm-labour is a new thing in Nupe. It has no place in the traditional system of land-tenure and *efakó* work. Characteristically, it is almost completely absent in the rural districts; it is employed mostly in the large commercial centres in which a considerable proportion of the population belongs to the well-to-do 'professional classes', such as Kacha, Jebba, and, above all, Bida.[1] Let me give you a list of the cases I recorded in which wage farm-labour was employed. The employers were a number of traders in Kacha who had bought some land a few years ago but did not work it themselves; a number of traders in Bida; two Mallams in Bida; a Mallam in Jebba whose health did not allow him to work on the land (he was employing wage-labour for the first time); Native Administration officials in Bida—a few policemen, and teachers at the Bida Middle School; and lastly, the village chief of Kacha (who is at the same time District Head) whose time is taken up by official

[1] One of my Bida informants, himself a well-to-do member of the 'intelligentsia', estimated that six out of ten farmers in Bida employ wage-labour. Though I should regard this estimate as much too high it is significant for the outlook of the urban *bourgeoisie*.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52



241 work, and whose relations also assist him in this work as messengers and the like.

464 The labourers are all young men, mostly the sons of farmers, but occasionally also sons of impoverished *bourgeois* families (one of the labourers on my list was the son of a Mallam, another the son of a Bida *saraki*). Some labourers come from far away to the place where they expect to find employment: thus I found a young man from Lapai working in Jebba, and one from Bida working in Ilorin. Their working day is from early morning till about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, that is, the normal working day of the *efakó* worker. They get 2*d.* or 3*d.* a day and food; they work mostly for from four to ten days, some for a longer period, till they have collected a substantial sum of money. In no case has wage-labour in Nupe become a permanent, exclusive occupation. These young men seek only temporary employment and return after or in between their engagements to the family farm, where they carry on with the ordinary work of the season. Even a temporary absence of this kind may, of course, render the management of the family farm difficult and even precarious. For instance, the labourer from Lapai whom I have just mentioned, was working in Jebba as late as June, and could not return home before July when all the early planting and weeding would be completed. However, the need of money seems to outweigh all other objections. The main motive in undertaking wage-labour is invariably to obtain money for tax—either for oneself or as contribution to the parental household; next in importance is the motive to obtain money for bride-price.

It must be said in conclusion that though wage-labour represents a comparatively recent growth in Nupe society, the situation which created the need of wage-labour is not. Nor is the system of employed, i.e. non-family, labour the product of a recent development. Part of the social stratification of Nupe was, as we have seen, the creation of an upper class which owned land but did not work it. The labour which this class had to employ was of three kinds: slave labour, the labour of pawns, and, to a lesser extent, of clients. The first and the last kind of employed labour, both involving a social and political significance far beyond the aspect of labour, we have discussed already in a previous section. The second kind—labour of pawns—we will discuss later when analysing the concept of wealth.

## DIVISION OF LABOUR BETWEEN THE SEXES (1)

462 The role which the women play in the agricultural production of the country lends itself to a simple formula. With very few exceptions the women do not perform any primary productive activity: they do no farm-work; they do not help in cultivation except occasionally when assisting the men in the harvesting of cotton or beans or the digging out of cassava—the easiest crop of all. Their sphere of work is, first, the 'refining' of agricultural produce to make it marketable, and secondly, the marketing itself. If the general formula is simple, the details of the division between 'primary' and 'secondary' productive activities, one

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

# CHAPTER XVII

## INDUSTRIAL LABOUR

464 177 THE influences of modern culture contact which we have seen at work in almost every field of Nupe production gain their fullest expression in this most recent native occupation. The employer is the Bida Native Administration; the employees are recruited from certain specific sections of the Nupe people, and the nature of this selection is deeply significant of the structure of the society.

We must distinguish two different categories of paid industrial labour: skilled permanent, and unskilled temporary, labour.[1] Skilled labour is employed in the workshops of the Native Administration Public Works Department, and comprises blacksmiths, mechanics, carpenters, and bricklayers, i.e. occupations which (with the exception of the bricklayers) are closely associated with the traditional native crafts of the country. Temporary unskilled labour is employed partly in addition to permanent labour in the N.A. Workshops, but mostly in occasional work demanding a large body of unskilled labourers such as construction work of various kinds. The term 'temporary' must be understood in a very loose sense; men who have been working as 'temporary' labourers, off and on, for ten or fifteen years figure prominently on my lists. Some [167] move from place to place, wherever there is a chance of finding employment. As there are large numbers of alien, non-Nupe, labourers among those engaged in temporary work in Nupe country, so we also find Nupe workmen in other districts and provinces of Nigeria. A few of these labourers have never even had another, more or less permanent, profession, but have adopted their present occupation in earliest youth. None of them, however, are skilled and specially trained labourers. By far the largest proportion of temporary labourers go home and return to whatever their original profession was when their temporary employment comes to an end. In the sense, then, that their work as labourers constitutes an alternative to some other original occupation, they can all be classed under the heading of 'temporary labourers'.

464 The data on which are based the statistical tables which follow were compiled in and near Bida in 1936. It was a fortunate coincidence that at the time a large building programme was being carried out—the construction of new office buildings in Bida, and the rebuilding of a big bridge on the Badeggi road—in which a large body of labourers was employed. My census of temporary labour was taken among the workmen who were employed in this work. I have placed bricklayers in the same category with temporary labourers, although, technically, they represent a group of skilled, permanent, workmen; but the technique of

[1] To be quite precise we should distinguish four different classes of labour: permanent and non-permanent, and skilled and unskilled. As, however, all skilled labour is permanent, and all non-permanent labour unskilled, and as unskilled permanent labour represents only a small minority (8 individuals) it is simpler to deal with the two sub-divisions as one.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52



their work is in no way connected with a traditional trade or craft, which means, that they all had to abandon another, original, occupation (either of themselves or their families) and that their present work constitutes an alternative profession in the sense just explained.

TABLE I

*Temporary Labour*

| Home | No alternative occupation | Alternative occupation | Seasonal labour | Length of employment as labourers: Under 2 years | 2–5 years | 5–10 years | Over 10 years | Totals |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bida | 6 (3) | 30 | 2 | 5 | 16 | 10 | 7 | 38 |
| Country | 1 | 3 | 15 | 10 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 19 |
| Totals | 7 | 33 | 17 | 15 | 21 | 13 | 8 | 57 |

Under 'No alternative occupation' I have listed in brackets the labourers who are studying the Koran in their spare time, but without intention of practising the profession of Koran teachers. The heading 'seasonal labour' refers to farmers who, for various reasons, seek work as labourers only in the dry season and return to their farm-work in the rains. It is natural that their number should be much larger among people from the country than among Bida men. All peasants, incidentally, who have become labourers during the last two years belong to this class of seasonal labour. Our figures further show that their number is greatly on the increase. Labourers pure and simple, as might be expected, come almost exclusively from Bida. The only exception is a man from Badeggi, the village on the urbanized railway, twelve miles from Bida; he is also the only country man who has been a labourer for over ten years. Under 'alternative occupations' I had to list a great many different occupations; Table III will show the various original, or 'alternative', occupations of temporary labourers. In Table II we shall examine the professional groups from which skilled permanent labour is recruited.

TABLE II

*Permanent Labour*

| Occupation of the labourer | Occupation of the labourer's family: Guild crafts: Same | Guild crafts: Different | Individual crafts | Farmers | Mallams | Traders | Nobility | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Carpenters | 6 | .. | .. | 1 | 1 | .. | 1 | 9 |
| Blacksmiths | 5 | 1 | .. | .. | 3 | .. | 2 | 10 |
| Total | 11 | 1 | .. | 1 | 3 | .. | 3 | 19 |

The large majority of skilled workmen come, as we see, from families which have practised the same crafts on indigenous lines both in Bida and in the villages. The few 'outsiders' appearing in this group come mostly from families with no specific occupation, such as Mallams, and nobility.

The largest contingent of country people among the labourers is, naturally, composed of farmers and farmers' sons. Comparing Table III

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52



TABLE III

*Temporary Labour*

| | | *Hoes* | *Farmers* | *Guild craft* | *Individual craft* | *Mallams* | *Traders* | *Nobility* | *No altern. occupation* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Occupation of father | Bida | 4 | 1 | 13 | 9 | 1 | 11 | .. | 39 |
| | Country | 10 | .. | .. | 6 | .. | 2 | .. | 18 |
| | Total | 14 | 1 | 13 | 15 | 1 | 13 | .. | 57 |
| Alternative occupation of labourer | Bida | 4 | 1 | 20 | 8 | .. | .. | 5 | 38 |
| | Country | 16 | .. | .. | 2 | .. | .. | 1 | 19 |
| | Total | 20 | 1 | 20 | 10 | .. | .. | 6 | 57 |

with Table I we can see that of the 16 farmers who have sought work as labourers only 1 has abandoned farming permanently for labourer's work, while 15 remained seasonal labourers. Turning to the Bida contingent we see that among the different professions which contribute to temporary labour individual crafts come first and Mallams second—the most loosely organized occupational groups thus contribute most heavily to occasional labour. The occupations of the families of which these labourers come appear in a slightly different order of importance: individual crafts are, again, first, with 'nobility' second and Mallams third. 'Nobility' means here mostly the lower political ranks, above all 'household' and *bara* ranks. Their share in the contribution reflects the great political and economic changes that have deprived many members of this 'leisure class' of a livelihood mainly derived from warfare or political attachment.

But what are the incentives which led the men from the other occupational groups to give up their previous occupation or to undertake the work of labourers in addition to their ordinary profession? This question is answered by the data of the last table.

TABLE IV

| | *Married* | *Unmarried* | *Tax as reason* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Permanent labour | 9 | 12 | .. |
| Temporary labour { Bida | 9 | 13 | 4 |
| Temporary labour { Country | 6 | 9 | 5 |
| Age 20–5 | 4 | 10 | .. |
| ,, 25–30 | 3 | 8 | .. |
| ,, 30–5 | 4 | 4 | .. |
| ,, 35–40 | 4 | .. | .. |

The majority among permanent as well as temporary labourers is unmarried—although many of the men, as we can see, have reached, and partly passed, the age at which it is normal for the Nupe man to marry. The work as labourers in their case was undertaken with the intent to obtain money for the bride-price, a plan which did not always materialize as our figures show, especially in Bida. For there are many other uses for money, and some, as we shall see later, may interfere with the laudable intention of working for one's bride-price. In a number of cases the reason for becoming a labourer was to obtain money for tax,

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52



either for oneself or for one's family. One young labourer from the country gave his father 5*s*. out of his weekly wages of 7*s*. to put by for his bride-price; another kept 2*s*. to 3*s*. a month for himself, and gave the rest to his father. Many Bida labourers, on the other hand, used the whole money for themselves; some explained that they had become labourers because there was no money in their old profession, others because they wanted to be independent and because their fathers or elder brothers could not give them as much money as they liked to have.

To summarize: as one would expect, paid labour, especially temporary labour, does not represent a 'real' profession in the sense of an occupation involving special training and selection of workers. It is essentially a stopgap occupation chosen to supplement or replace a failing normal source of income. Owing to the specific composition of Nupe society the new profession is being adopted by certain social groups and strata more than by others. Yet in some respects paid industrial labour must be regarded almost as a modern continuation of forms of occupations which, in the traditional society, bore the same supplementary and stopgap character. As such it appeals strongly to the individual craftsman, to Mallams, and *bara*, who depend for their livelihood on similar forms of unskilled and partly temporary work. It differs from these other occupations, however, in that it is carried out on the road and in the workshop yard instead of in the home, and that it represents heavy manual labour, and not light work which it is easy to combine with a dignified social status. The labourers, unlike the individual craftsmen, can no longer pretend that they belong to the leisured class. If they receive better and more regular pay, they also lose caste. This explains why of the many hundreds of men who, once members of the privileged classes, are to-day men 'without occupation',[1] gaining a precarious livelihood from occasional work, only those coming from the lowest grade of the 'upper classes' have chosen the profession of labourers.

In the case of the peasants we can no longer speak of any inherent congruity between their work and the new temporary occupation. To them, especially to the peasants who do not practise a handicraft beside agriculture, paid labour in addition to farm-work, a form of labour, moreover, which keeps them for months from their homes, must appear as something quite new and unprecedented. If to-day paid labour is gradually attracting the peasant class as well, twenty or thirty years ago the (very prosperous) Nupe peasants had to be coaxed by all available means to undertake temporary paid labour, for example, in railway construction. The more 'sophisticated' Hausa and Yoruba were already then flocking in large numbers to work of this kind. Missionaries who knew Nupe country at that time told me that it was often impossible in the peasant districts to obtain even porters to carry loads; the promise of money did not attract them sufficiently to make them leave their homes even temporarily, to upset their whole routine of work or forgo their well-earned leisure. In certain backward and prosperous districts this

[1] An unofficial occupational census of Bida lists 1,130 men under the class 'no occupation'. They belong without exception to the titled leisured classes of the Emirate.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52



attitude has still survived: when I trekked through the country round Sakpe in 1936 I found myself in the same predicament, and although it was in the dry season and farming was at a standstill, I had eventually to agree to women carrying my loads as men were not available for this task. That the appeal of paid labour as a seasonal occupation for peasants is rapidly gaining ground cannot be doubted. The stopgap occupation can, in fact, be said to satisfy a definite want in present-day peasant economy.[1] The strength of its appeal still varies greatly locally. The large majority of the peasants whom I found employed as labourers in the construction of Badeggi bridge were local men or men from the neighbourhood of Bida. Of 19 labourers 14 came from Badeggi itself, 3 from hamlets near Bida, 1 from Kacha, 1 from a village farther afield (Jima), and none from Trans-Kaduna. The local selection does not merely reflect varying degrees of progressiveness or 'sophistication'; it also reflects the varying urgency of the wants for the relief of which paid labour is undertaken. The nature of these wants we shall discuss in detail later.

[1] To-day many Nupe peasants are ready to try any kind of paid labour, but will abandon it quickly if it falls short of their expectations of a regular and substantial income. Thus the Nupe of Leaba tried their luck in gold-washing, which is carried out on a considerable scale in that district. They had heard from Hausa labourers that one could make as much as 9*d*. or 1*s*. a day in this work. They had not realized, however, that the payment was not per day, but depended on the amount of gold which the individual worker can produce. As the Nupe were rather clumsy and slow, unlike the experienced Hausa labourers, their pay was small and irregular, and, gravely disappointed, they soon gave up gold-washing.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52



438 241 Plants important for trade and in native industry include cotton, henna (*lali*), and hemp, both introduced from Hausa country, and gourds. The by-products of agriculture, such as grain stalks, are used by the cultivator and his family for making fences, beds, and mats; sorghum stalks yield black and red vegetable dyes. Occasionally large non-fruit-bearing trees are cut down and sold to carpenters.[11]

### Organization and Division of Labour

241 476 A two-fold principle of collective family work (*efakó*) and individual work (*bucá*) applies to farm labour, and to its products, income, and granaries. Each male member of the household owns a *bucá* farm, while all work on the *efakó* farm, the produce of which is stored in the *efakó* granaries, the head controlling the disposal. Sometimes forms of productive labour other than farm work are organized according to the *efakó* system, e.g., indigo-dyeing at Mokwa.

All those who share in the *efakó* group work are housed, clothed, and fed, and have their tax and marriage payments met by the household head, who also supplies tools and pays for their repair. Personal requirements beyond this are paid for from the proceeds of the *bucá* work. The present tendency is for large *efakó* groups to disintegrate on the death of the household head, the members of the group demanding a larger measure of freedom than the *efakó* system provides.

Mutual assistance and large-scale collective labour is of two types: *egbe*, for *efakó* farm work (mainly tilling and weeding), and for work for the community as a whole, e.g., building or roofing of a chief's house, repair of a bush bridge or road or of a town wall or the N.A. rest-house, etc. *Egbe* farm work is, on the whole, performed by younger people, often members of one or more of the age-set associations; it is accompanied by drummers and musicians and concludes with a feast. Help is generally enlisted for tilling and for the first and second weeding, and *egbe* is performed first and on the largest scale on the chief's farm.

The second type of mutual assistance—*àzolo*—is less important. It is an arrangement among a number of farmers to work on each other's farms in turn, usually for the harvesting of groundnuts, cotton, and beans.

●464 Wage labour (*kantsú*; Hausa, *lada*) plays an insignificant part in Nupe production. It is found only in large commercial centres, such as Kacha and Jebba, and in Bida for temporary employment only.

462 Women do practically no farm work, but they undertake the processing of agricultural produce for market and the actual marketing, and the exploitation of the shea-nut tree is entirely in the hands of women.[12]

Floor-beating is an important women's task and is made something of a ceremony. While the old women pour water on to it the young women beat the floor with wooden beaters wrapped in rugs in time to the rhythm of drums.[13]

### Livestock

231 [422] Cattle are of minor importance in Nupe economy. They are owned only by butchers who buy from Bornu and Fulani traders. The cattle are of the northern humped breed and are not immune from trypanosomiasis. Sheep are rarely kept for breeding but are fattened and sold.

[262] [492] 554 No pigs are kept and no pork is eaten.[14] Every household keeps chickens which are bought and sold regularly in the food markets of all the larger villages. Eggs are not marketed and are eaten only rarely in Nupe country. Donkeys are kept as transport animals. Horses (mainly in Bida) are a symbol of high rank and status.[15]

[11] Nadel, 1942, pp. 50, 230–7, 238, 205–14; Line, 1947: Temple 1919, p. 236.
[12] Nadel, 1942, pp. 241–56.
[13] Malam Aliyu Bida, notes, ed. P. G. Harris.
[14] Pigs were reported in Sharagi (Share) in 1918 and Pategi in 1912 (Notes by Biscoe and Budgen).
[15] Nadel, 1942, pp. 201–4

the villages drumming is mainly a side-line to farming. Drummers in Bida form small bands or companies, the origins of which, and the type of their performance, vary. Both men and women perform and women sing. Members of a single group may come from different families. There are no *efakó* arrangements. Such a band may be in a *bara* (client) relationship to a nobleman. The various bands or companies do not co-operate. The drums are made by wood-workers on the river.[30]

*Western crafts* are practised for wages in the workshops of the N.A. Public Works Dept. These craftsmen include blacksmiths, mechanics, carpenters, and bricklayers. Temporary unskilled labour is employed mainly in occasional work demanding a large body of unskilled labour, such as construction work of various kinds. Most of these labourers go home and return to their permanent work at the end of their temporary employment. Those who are farmers seek temporary employment during the dry season only, to supplement the normal source of income.[31]

*Women's crafts*

*Pottery* is practised individually. Jebba Island, Baro, Badeggi, and Bida are famous for their pottery and there is a regular trade in both potters' clay and pots. The main products are small water jugs and large water containers. Clay is prepared from swamps at Gbako River, at Badeggi, and sold by the villagers. It is tempered with powdered potsherd or brick. The building of the pots is individual work, but firing is undertaken collectively. Pots are simply fired, then given a brown wash or blackened with a concoction of shea-nut bark.

*Shea-butter manufacture* is carried out by women, but the roasting ovens are built by men.

*Indigo-dyeing* is practised only by a few *Konú* groups, where the men are weavers and the women dyers. The indigo-grass and the indigo-tree are cultivated by men, but where the indigo is picked and prepared from wild growing grass, the work is done by women. The dye-pot platforms are made by women; the dyeing is carried out individually. There are a few groups of male dyers (e.g., in Mokwa), who use a rather different technique from that employed by the women.

*Women's weaving* is done on upright looms 21 ins. broad, which may be of Yoruba origin. Among the Basa-Nge, older women weave patterned raffia. Fishing-nets in Kede are made by old men and women from *rama* fibre.[32]

*Weapons and tools* include spears, bows and poisoned arrows used by the more remote groups, and knives with blades 8 to 10 ins. long. A few men use flint-locks, and formerly a whole section of the Nupe army was equipped with guns.

*Dug-out canoes* are used by the Bataci as well as the Kyedye. Those of the latter are large and square with caulked top strakes. They are mostly obtained from Onitsha and the lower Benue.

*Musical instruments* include a central-hole flute (the blow-hole is midway between the ends of the tube), pipes, clarinets (of Hausa origin), various drums and rattles, long bronze trumpets (forming part of the royal insignia), and, in some areas, bull-roarers and animal horns.

*Gabi figures* are statues of different origins. Two bronze figures stand unprotected in the centre of the village of Jebba Island near a dilapidated hut which is said to have been formerly a temple. There are seven figures at Tada village which are kept in a round hut and carefully tended; some of these are human figures and some animal and they appear to be of diverse origins, but are regarded traditionally as having been left by Tsoede on his flight up the Niger.[33]

[30] Nadel, op cit., pp. 301–3. For an outline of the *bara* system see below p. 35.
[31] Nadel, op cit., pp. 304–8.
[32] Nadel, op cit., pp. 235, 293–7; Hopkins, 1934; Notes on Kede District, 1950.
[33] Temple, 1919, pp. 114, 117, 198, 332; Meek, 1925, vol. I. p. 106; Walker, 1934; see also Palmer, 1931.